

BANTHA TRACKS



NEWSLETTER OF THE OFFICIAL STAR WARS FAN CLUB



**INTERVIEW:
GEORGE LUCAS**

SW: Tell us about your childhood

GL: I grew up in Modesto, California and spent a pretty normal childhood there. Until I was eighteen I had planned to be a race-car driver, but then I had a terrible car accident. While I was in the hospital recuperating, I began to think about going to college. College offered psychology, anthropology, and other such subjects not taught in high school.

SW: When did you become interested in film?

GL: I had been accepted at San Francisco State College and planned to go there until a friend of mine suggested that I go to the University of Southern California, where he was planning to go. I didn't know what I would study there, but he suggested the film department, saying that it was very easy and that anyone could get through it. I thought that sounded great and managed to get accepted. Once there, I was completely captivated by film.

SW: What was it specifically that excited you about film?

GL: Mainly using the camera and editing. I was much more drawn to the visual side of film than to the writing. I never was very good at writing and found that preparing scripts was pretty boring. But I did well in the visual aspects and loved making abstract movies, documentaries, tone poems — none of which I really had to sit down and write. Instead I could construct them in the editing room. I found that my primary interest was not in working with actors but in working with film as pure film.

SW: Your first feature film, *THX 1138*, was an extension of a student film you had done at USC. How did the feature version come about?

GL: I knew that I wanted to make a film, but felt that I should hire a writer to do the screenplay. At that point, I was working as Francis Coppola's assistant. He encouraged me to write my own script, saying that I'd never be a good director if I didn't learn to write. Francis is a good storyteller and an extremely good writer, and he encouraged me to start writing. Through his influence I began working on my writing and moving toward more theatrical writing that would incorporate actors. So, I turned out my first script, *THX 1138*, and it was really terrible, I'm afraid. Finally, I asked Walter Murch to help on it and together we wrote the script

that I eventually shot. My interest in making *THX* came largely from my long-standing desire to do something in the space-fantasy genre. It's a fairly pessimistic film, I think, and a parable of modern-day life. I shot the film on real locations, but slightly exaggerated and distorted things to create an interesting, somewhat futuristic look.

SW: *THX* and *Star Wars* are both space-fantasy films, yet are very different, with *THX* more experimental and *Star Wars* basically an action-adventure type of film. Which type do you prefer?

GL: That's like asking which do I like better — ice cream or Hershey bars? They're both good, and both have their attractive aspects. In my heart, though, I probably lean toward the more experimental type of film. I'd like to do more of this sort of film but not for distribution, so that should relieve any worry about whether or not those films would be marketable or commercial.

SW: How did *American Graffiti* come about?

GL: After *THX* I wanted to try something different. Francis and other people were encouraging me to make a warm, human film to prove I wasn't just some cold, arty director who could only make science fiction films. So I wrote *American Graffiti*. Once I had thought up the idea for *Graffiti*, I was amazed that no one had ever done that story before. It was about cruising, which is at least one of the top-ten national pastimes — almost like making a move about baseball or politics. For me, *Graffiti* was an easy film since I knew, almost from the beginning, exactly what I wanted. I knew it had to take place in one night; I knew who my four main characters were; and I knew what those characters' problems had to be. From there it was just a matter of creating scenes from that basic structure. I blocked out the story, then worked with Bill and Gloria Huyck on developing the individual scenes. I had lived through some of those incidents myself, including the police-car sequence. So we put that in, and all the other great moments we could think of. Essentially, *American Graffiti* is a movie about kids and their world. Unlike *THX*, *Graffiti* really had an effect on people's lives. Kids even started cruising again, which they hadn't done for years.

SW: After *Graffiti* you were going to direct *Apocalypse Now*. Why did you do *Star Wars* instead?

GL: After seeing the effect *Graffiti* had on high-school kids, more or less showing them what it was to be a teenager, I started to think about ten- and twelve-year-olds who have lost something even more significant than teenagers have. I saw that kids that age don't have the fantasy life we had had as kids. They don't have Westerns; they don't have pirate movies; they don't have all that stupid serial fantasy life that we used to believe in. They also don't have heroes. I had been a big fan of Flash Gordon and a believer in the exploration of space. I felt, then, that *Star Wars* would be a natural and could give kids a fantasy life that they really needed to have. I wanted to make a romantic space fantasy, the sort of thing that existed before the hard, cold side of science took over the genre in the fifties.

SW: At one point there were going to be twelve *Star Wars* films.

GL: I cut that number down to nine because the other three were tangential to the saga. *Star Wars* was the fourth story in the saga and was to have been called "Star Wars, Episode Four: A New Hope." But I decided people wouldn't understand the numbering system so we dropped it. For *Empire*, though, we're putting back the number and will call it "Episode Five: The Empire Strikes

Back." After the third film in this trilogy we'll go back and make the first trilogy, which deals with the young Ben Kenobi and the young Darth Vader.

SW: What is the third trilogy about?

GL: It deals with the character that survives *Star Wars III* and his adventures.

SW: Very mysterious. I've heard a rumor that in editing *Empire* you made changes in the content of the story, changes that the cast wasn't aware of.

GL: There are always changes that occur during the editing process, changes that the cast wouldn't be informed of. But we didn't make any drastic alterations. Obviously, scenes were cut down and things were lost, but no scenes were cut out completely.

SW: To many people Artoo-Detoo was the star of *Star Wars*. How did you develop that character?

GL: The truth is that when I was mixing the soundtrack for *American Graffiti* with the sound editor, Walter Murch, we were working with a number of dialogue tracks and about twelve reels of film. Walter asked me to go to the rack and get R2-D2 — reel two, dialogue track two. When I heard that I thought what a great name that would be, and wrote it down in my little book. When I was developing the character of the little robot in *Star Wars* I developed it around that name.

A similar thing happened with Chewbacca, the Wookiee. A friend of mine, Terry McGovern, and I were riding in his car one day when he said, "I think I ran over a Wookiee back there!" I asked him what a Wookiee was, and he said he didn't know, that he had just made it up. I loved the word, so I wrote it down and planned to use it when I had a chance.

SW: What new characters are in *The Empire Strikes Back*?

GL: There's Han Solo's friend, Lando Calrissian, who is played by Billy Dee Williams. And there's another character, Yoda, a Jedi Master who teaches Luke about being a Jedi.

SW: Was Lando created in response to criticism about the lack of non-Caucasians in *Star Wars*?

GL: Not really. I had always intended Lando to be a black man. The criticisms about *Star Wars* were blown way out of proportion since there were no minority groups represented among the leads, although there were blacks in the film.

SW: Will Lando become a more prominent character as the saga continues?

GL: Yes, he has a prominent part in the next film.

SW: How do you think *Star Wars* and *Empire* compare?

GL: *Empire* is a much different film than *Star Wars*. It's a rather sad film, more of a tragedy than a comedy. As the second part of this trilogy it compares with the second act in a play. Everything goes wrong in the second act, and then everything is resolved in the third and final act. In my opinion, *Empire* is a better film than the first one was.

SW: Why did you choose not to direct *Empire*?

GL: I've never really enjoyed directing, so I have more or less retired from directing. I felt that if I directed *Empire* I'd have to direct the next one, and the one after that, and so on for the rest of my life.

SW: What does your role as executive producer entail?

GL: It's a much easier job than directing. I generally oversee the production and, although I have less control over specific things, I find I can live a much saner life than as a director!

SW: How much involvement did you have working with the composer, the director, and the writers on *Empire*?

GL: I had a fairly close involvement with all of them, but it varied somewhat from person to person. I would say that John Williams had the most autonomy since I don't know that much about music. I was able to make some suggestions about what I thought would work and what wouldn't, and found him to be very receptive to making changes. With Kershner I offered some suggestions, but he was generally on his own to make the film as he saw fit. With the first writer, Leigh Brackett, things were a



Darth Vader traps Luke Skywalker during their climactic lightsaber duel.

little different. I gave her a very detailed story and from that she wrote the first draft of the screenplay. Unfortunately, she died soon after that draft was completed. I did several more drafts before we found another screenwriter, Lawrence Kasdan. His job was to clean up the script and put on the finishing touches.

SW: What are your plans for the third story in this trilogy, "Revenge of the Jedi"?

GL: We plan to begin pre-production on that film in January 1981. I'm writing the screenplay alone this time. Also, I won't be directing "Jedi," so we'll find another director for the project. It will probably go into production late in 1981 and should be finished and released by spring of 1983.

SW: What else is on the production schedule?

GL: Steven Spielberg will be directing *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, a film that will start production this spring. I'll be executive producer. *Raiders* is an action-adventure story that takes place all over the world and is set in the twentieth century.

SW: What is your involvement with Akira Kurosawa on his new samurai film?

GL: I'm executive producer for the English-language version of the film, and have helped Kurosawa get the financing he needed.

SW: What is the progress on your "think tank" film facility in Mann County?

GL: Not much is happening on that right now. We can't really do too much until after *Empire* is released — but once it is, we'll get underway. It will take a year to put the roads in, and then we'll start building.

SW: What will eventually be there?

GL: There will be an office building, film research facilities, a screening room, and Industrial Light and Magic, our special effects company. We'll also have facilities for doing all kinds of animation. Right now we're working on an animated children's film with John Korty. It's called *Twice Upon a Time* and is a little fairy tale.

SW: The *Star Wars* films have a fairy-tale quality, too.

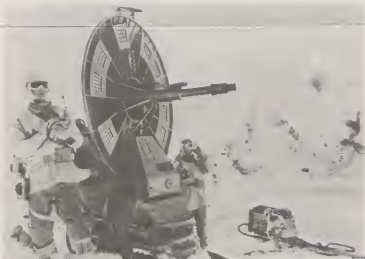
GL: Yes, I agree. As a student of anthropology I've always been interested in the role myths and fairy tales play in educating young people about behavior in society. Before I did *Star Wars* I was aware of the lack of fairy tales in contemporary life and aware that the number of parents who read fairy tales to their children was dwindling. As more families break up, children aren't being read to at bedtime anymore and instead spend long hours in front of a television set. As a result, they learn their mythology from television. Unfortunately, television conveys no sense of morality since it is itself amoral. So, unless a child has very strong family life or is involved with his religion, there's no real anchor to grab on to. When I developed *Star Wars* I thought, of it as a contemporary fairy tale with values and a moral point of view. I think because of that it has a universal, permanent appeal.



Han Solo uses primitive means to deactivate C-3PO's voice mechanism.



Darth Vader confronts Lando Calrissian and Boba Fett on Cloud City.



Rebel soldiers preparing to fire the dish laser gun at attacking Imperial snow walkers on the surface of the ice planet Hoth.



Princess Leia looks on while Chewbacca attempts to repair C-3PO.



Luke Skywalker and R2-D2 examine their crashed X-wing fighter on Dagobah.

Photos by George Whitear and Knut Vadreth

Now that *The Empire Strikes Back* has been completed, Lucasfilm, Ltd. is preparing to start work on the third film in the *Star Wars* saga, to be called *Revenge of the Jedi*. Pre-production will begin in January of 1981, and the film is tentatively scheduled for release during the spring of 1983.

Revenge of the Jedi will complete the middle trilogy of the nine-part *Star Wars* epic. Following its completion, the first trilogy will be filmed, and then finally, the last trilogy.

Should production on the nine films continue at the same rate, we can expect to see the ninth film released in the spring of 2001.

AMATEUR FILMS

We're curious to know how many members of the Official Star Wars Fan Club are interested in amateur filmmaking — especially in making amateur science fiction films. Many of today's top filmmakers, including George Lucas, Gary Kurtz and Steven Spielberg, started out by making their own films, either as a hobby or in school.

Write to us and let us know if you've made any amateur science fiction films and, if there's enough interest, we'll do a special feature on filmmaking and will include tips from such special effects experts as Brian Johnson and Richard Edlund. Let us know what films you've made, how old you were when you made them, and what the films were about.

PEN PAL SERVICE

In an effort to increase member activity, the OSWFC is now offering a pen pal service. This is an opportunity for members to increase communication with other members. Sharing ideas on a common interest can be a wonderful way to get to know new people from all parts of the country and the world. To become a pen pal, simply send a self-addressed stamped envelope, or, if you live outside of the United States, send a self-addressed envelope with an International Response Coupon to the club's address, being sure to write "Pen Pal" on the outer envelope.

When we receive your letter, we will send you a pen pal form. Fill out the form and mail the completed form to us, and we will match you up with your optimum pen pal. Each of you will receive a copy of the other's form so that you can begin corresponding. As always, when you write to the Fan Club, include your name, address and Force number, and please remember to type or print clearly.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

The Empire Strikes Back will be released any day now, and to go along with that, we're anticipating a large increase in membership in the Official Star Wars Fan Club. In honor of the new film in the *Star Wars* saga, we've totally revamped the membership kit. The new kit contains a full-color poster, six 8" x 10" color photos, a peel-and-stick decal, an embroidered patch, and other *ESB* items.

All new members will receive this kit, and current members can receive it upon renewing their memberships. The top line of your mailing label will tell you when your membership expires. On the left of the label is your Force number, and on the right is the date of the last *Bantha Tracks* issue you'll receive under your current subscription. When it's time for you to renew, you will receive a renewal card along with your copy of *Bantha Tracks*. Renewals are \$4.00 (\$5.00 if non-U.S.). Please do not send cash.

If you move, please write to us and let us know your new address. Every time we mail out an issue of *Bantha Tracks*, the post office returns several thousand copies marked "moved, left no forwarding address." We have no way of locating you unless you inform us when you move.

If you have friends who you think would like to join the Official Star Wars Fan Club, send us their names and addresses and we'll send them information on how to join.

In our last issue we announced a special *Star Wars* telephone line giving information on *The Empire Strikes Back*. This line, on which you can receive messages from C-3PO, Darth Vader, Han Solo and Luke Skywalker, proved so popular that we had to add seven additional lines to handle the load. Even so, the number of incoming calls has been so great that it's still hard to get through.

For those members of the Fan Club who have been unsuccessful in reaching this special line, we are publishing transcriptions of all the messages.

C-3PO:

"Hello, I am C-3PO, and this is the first of a series of messages on the special *Star Wars* telephone line. Each time one of you on Earth calls this number, you will receive a message giving information on the continuation of the *Star Wars* saga, *The Empire Strikes Back*."

After *Star Wars*, I hoped that all my adventures were over and R2-D2 wouldn't get us into trouble with his secret missions, but in *The Empire Strikes Back*, it just gets worse.

First, there was that dreadful snow planet — I thought I'd never be warm again. Then we were attacked by Imperial stormtroopers, and when we got to the Cloud City, I just went all to pieces. Oh, dear, talking about it is too upsetting. You'll just have to see it for yourselves when *The Empire Strikes Back* comes to a theater near you on May 21st, 1980."

Darth Vader:

"They managed to rescue the Princess and to destroy the Death Star, but this time the Rebels won't be so lucky. The power of the Death Star was insignificant compared to the power of the Force. And with Obi-Wan Kenobi gone, I am the master. See it, as *The Empire Strikes Back*."

Han Solo:

"Until I ran into Ben Kenobi and Luke Skywalker, I had myself a pretty good little operation. They wanted a ride to Alderaan and they were willing to pay enough so I didn't have to ask any questions. Now I'm in the middle of a rebellion. I'm spending half my time dodging Imperial ships and the other half avoiding her holiness. Not only that, but Jabba the Hut has a price on my head and he's put Boba Fett on my trail. Something tells me it's not going to get any better when *The Empire Strikes Back*."

Luke Skywalker:

"Tatooine was just a big ball of dust until Artoo and Threepio showed up. But since then my life hasn't been the same — from a moisture farmer on a remote desert planet to a leader of the Rebellion fighting for freedom throughout the galaxy."

But now the Rebellion faces even greater odds, and I must be ready. I must follow Ben Kenobi's teachings and learn more about the powers of the Force in becoming a Jedi Knight if I'm going to be prepared for a confrontation with Darth Vader. See it, when *The Empire Strikes Back*."

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